United Nations A/53/PV.34

General Assembly
Fifty-third Session

Official Records

34th plenary meeting
Friday, 9 October 1998, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

In the absence of the President, Mr. Mangoaela (Lesotho), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Agenda item 164

Causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General (A/52/871)

The Acting President: I first give the floor to the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: I am privileged to introduce this important debate on the report on Africa that I submitted to the Security Council last April and now present to the General Assembly. I am also very pleased to witness the seriousness with which the Assembly is treating the questions posed in the report, for it reflects the Assembly's recognition of Africa's needs and Africa's challenges.

Members know that the real value of the report will be measured by the tangible, lasting difference that it makes in the lives of the poorest and most vulnerable of Africa's peoples. That is our challenge and that is our mission.

The report aims to contribute to Africa's progress in two distinct, but related, ways: first, by paying the peoples of Africa the tribute of truth, by honestly and candidly reporting to the world their challenges and their aspirations; secondly, by proposing realistic and achievable recommendations for how those challenges may be met. In the report, I further emphasized that any and all efforts at securing peace had to be combined with steps towards ending Africa's poverty.

In this regard, I emphasized the need for a comprehensive response to a challenge that has many roots and many facets. Specifically, I called for the promotion of investment and economic growth, of ensuring adequate levels of international aid, of reducing debt burdens and opening international markets to Africa's products. These are the aims on which we all can agree; we can also all agree that they are far from being met.

While the burden of responsibility for Africa's fate lies in Africa's hands, Africa's development partners can also do more and do better to assist Africa in its struggle for lasting prosperity. I am pleased to say that there are indications that all sides have recognized the urgency of our common challenge.

Last month, I convened an informal meeting of Ministers of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) countries to highlight five priority areas in meeting Africa's economic challenges. Those are: first, the need to increase the volume and improve the quality of official development assistance; secondly, to consider converting all remaining official bilateral debt owed by

98-86035 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

the poorest African countries into grants; thirdly, to liberalize access to the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt (HIPC) Initiative; fourthly, to ease access conditions for African exports; and fifthly, to encourage investments in Africa, which has largely been marginalized in the process of globalization.

I am pleased to say that all the Governments represented reaffirmed their support for the recommendations in the report, and, in particular, for the five priority areas I indicated. Indeed, some Governments have already acted on their pledges of support and are taking concrete steps. At the same time, they stressed the need, on the part of African States, to create the enabling environments for investments and economic growth.

There must be reciprocity. No one can be expected to invest in unstable and insecure neighbourhoods. This goes for domestic investors as well as international investors. It places enormous responsibilities on African leaders to end the current political crisis on the continent and to work together to bring peace through political means and accept that one cannot use military means to solve these problems.

Since the meeting with the DAC Ministers, I have had a number of opportunities to emphasize to donors and other international organizations the importance of these initiatives. Last Tuesday I met with Mr. Robert Rubin, United States Secretary of the Treasury, to discuss the current global economic situation, in particular the crisis of globalization and the United Nations response. I also urged immediate and dramatic action on the debt situation facing Africa's poorest nations, particularly in these dark days of global economic crisis.

I pointed out that none of these countries had played any part in this crisis, but they are all suffering from its fallout, not least due to the fall in commodity prices. I again stressed the need to ease access to the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative and urged that its requirements be made more flexible to allow genuine relief.

As many representatives know, numerous initiatives in the political and economic fields are under way as part of the follow-up to the report. Most immediately, I will be convening a discussion on debt relief by the Panel of High-level Personalities on African Development next week and expect to hear new and innovative ideas for how we may be more effective in our efforts to end Africa's debt problem.

I am confident that the decision of the General Assembly to consider my report will add renewed momentum to its implementation and inspire all who labour in Africa's service to do more and do better.

Allow me to conclude by noting the added urgency of our challenge in a time when the global economy is facing serious threats and when millions the world over have been thrown back into a life of poverty after years of struggle and success. This crisis is now a threat not only to Africa's prospects for growth, but also to Africa's attempts to secure free and democratic societies.

We must succeed, for we cannot afford to fail.

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso) (*interpretation from French*): My first duty is to congratulate the President and the other members of the Bureau who have been elected to preside over the fifty-third session of the General Assembly. I venture to assert that Africa is confident that they will help it assist the entire international community in making progress along the path of peace and progress.

Peace and progress are precisely the focus of our concerns today during this debate on the report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. On behalf of the African States and as current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), Burkina Faso would like to hail the initiative of the Secretary-General, who has given the Assembly an opportunity to address the issues of a continent where endless conflicts and economic disparities have put it at the forefront of our concerns recently.

It is virtually a commonplace to say that the situation in Africa now is a problem of concern to the international community, and above all, to those whose primary function it is to guarantee peace and collective security — namely, the United Nations. Not that this Organization has shirked its responsibilities in this field. The report of the Secretary-General more than adequately demonstrates the interest the United Nations has in our continent and its problems. In addition, based on its experience in the Congo in 1960, the United Nations has become involved in other operations, such as those in Somalia, Angola and the Central African Republic. But we believe that it should be still further involved at a time when Africa is prey to serious conflicts which are dangerously impeding its development efforts.

As we are all aware, in addition to those that I have just mentioned, crises and conflicts are now causing conflagrations between Ethiopia and Eritrea, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Guinea-Bissau. Africa is daily demonstrating its determination to settle these fratricidal wars through peaceful means.

As regards Eritrea and Ethiopia, several mediation attempts have already taken place under the aegis of the Organization of African Unity, and it is expected that they will resume shortly in Ouagadougou, perhaps even at the end of this month. Regarding Guinea-Bissau, the joint efforts of the subregional organization of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP) are attempting to find a solution to this difficult problem. Moreover, the current Chairman of the OAU intends to arrange in December a summit meeting of member States of the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution in Africa in order to achieve a just and lasting resolution of the various crises which are undermining the continent.

We are aware, however, that the efforts of the Organization of African Unity to find African solutions to these African problems must be supported by the international community as a whole.

This was the thrust of the appeal recently made by Burkina Faso President Blaise Compaoré, the current Chairman of the OAU, when he stated before the General Assembly that

> "the management of conflict situations often requires the deployment of a level of human, material and financial resources beyond the capacities of our countries. Thus, international organizations should continue to show solidarity and partnership with Africa". (*A/53/PV.7*)

As the Secretary-General emphasizes in the report before us,

> "Despite a number of important successes, the inability of the United Nations to restore peace to Somalia soured international support for conflict intervention and precipitated a rapid retreat by the international community from peacekeeping worldwide. An early and direct consequence of this retreat was the failure of the international community, including the United Nations, to intervene to prevent genocide in Rwanda." (*A/52/871, para. 11*)

Whether or not this is true, it does not absolve us of the duty to re-establish equilibrium, first, by working to restore confidence between the United Nations and the African peoples, whom, as we have seen, may be feeling that the Organization is not interested in their difficulties; and secondly, by persuading the United Nations to involve itself further in these crises and thereby demonstrate its universal nature and, above all, its determination to guarantee world order.

Aside from all these considerations, the starting point must of course, be genuine political will. In the section of his report devoted to summoning the necessary political will, the Secretary-General stresses the respective responsibilities of Africa and the international community in this regard. For its part, Africa, in the Ouagadougou Declaration adopted at the thirty-fourth ordinary session of the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government, provides clear indications of that will. In the Declaration, the heads of State and Government recognize unequivocally that political issues are primarily national and undertake to work towards the establishment and consolidation of effective democratic systems.

The Declaration gives priority to respect for human rights; the eradication of impunity; the establishment of systems of government based on ongoing social dialogue and the search for political consensus; ending exclusion by involving all sectors, without discrimination, in the management of public affairs; the fight against the illicit proliferation of weapons, in particular light arms; the drug trade; the eradication of cross-border crime; and the promotion of credible and independent justice accessible to all.

Africa hopes that the international community will back the will strongly expressed in the Ouagadougou Declaration by supporting it in all its aspects. It hopes that the international community will support this effort by discharging its responsibilities and, in accordance with the Secretary-General's recommendation, by easing the financial conditions imposed by the international financial institutions on countries in crisis, *inter alia*, by promoting social development, restructuring and reducing the debt burden, truly opening the international markets to African products, strongly supporting regional cooperation and integration, and not fuelling conflicts for economic benefit.

These considerations prompt me to address another important aspect of the African situation: economic problems or, more precisely, the problem of

development. In this respect, too, the Secretary-General's report reminds us most relevantly that the promotion of lasting peace on our continent requires significant economic development, because the interaction between peace and development is truly real and ineluctable. It is on the basis of this observation that the current Chairman of the OAU, President Blaise Compaoré, intends to convene next year an economic summit on Africa to seek solutions to these thorny economic problems.

The proposals and initiatives to emerge from the summit should be not a catalogue of pious wishes, but rather an innovative and new therapy for coping with the problems of impoverishment and famine and, above all, for establishing our countries on the road to globalization. We, or rather the myriad experts, have over-diagnosed Africa's ills. We now need strong medicine to overcome underdevelopment.

The economic summit must therefore not be just another meeting and we must prepare it with maximum care and judiciousness. Since it will be our gateway to the twenty-first century, it must fulfil all hopes and all expectations. The support for this conference that has already been promised by the United Nations Secretary-General, the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme and the President of the World Bank guarantees the serious results that we anticipate from it.

For now, we must deplore the serious economic upheavals and trade disparities from which Africa continues to suffer under an unjust international system, compounded by the burden of relentless debt to which the Secretary-General referred earlier, despite the few relief measures undertaken by some countries and multilateral agencies. I must also mention the vagaries of such natural disasters as floods and drought and of such endemic diseases as AIDS and malaria, all of which hamper the development of our continent.

In conclusion, I wish again to congratulate most sincerely Secretary-General Kofi Annan for the depth and clarity of his report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. His ideas provide the Security Council with an opportunity to act beyond making statements, which, however necessary, are insufficient. We must act not only to end the current conflicts battering Africa, but also to spare other peoples these horrendous tragedies.

In conclusion, I wish most sincerely to thank the United Nations for its efforts in peacekeeping and promoting sustainable development in Africa. We hope that it will become even further involved and, in particular, respond as rapidly to the conflicts in Africa as it does elsewhere in the world. We also hope that the United Nations operational development system, despite its limited resources, will continue to support our development efforts.

Mr. Sucharipa (Austria): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. In addition, the Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated country Cyprus, as well as the European Free Trade Association country member of the European Economic Area, Iceland, align themselves with this statement.

To stay within the time limits set I will focus my intervention on the main issues it covers, its full text being made available in English and French.

Let me first thank the Secretary-General for his important introduction today and for the leadership he has shown on this item throughout. We would, on behalf of the European Union, like to take this opportunity to reiterate our appreciation to the Secretary-General for the report before us on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa.

Our discussions on the follow-up to the Secretary-General's report take place at a very timely moment. On the one hand, we are able to observe signs of political and socio-economic progress, sometimes referred to under the expression "African Renaissance". On the other hand, violent conflicts are spreading over parts of the continent, with the risk even of their escalating into open regional war. Africa is at a crossroads. We therefore highly value the integrated approach taken in the report to prevent violent conflicts as well as its focus on human security and sustainable human development, two issues which are intrinsically linked. It is indeed appropriate that, following the deliberations in the Security Council, the General Assembly now addresses the report focusing on issues under its own purview.

"With sufficient political will on the part of Africa and on the part of the international

community peace and development in Africa can be given a new momentum." (*A/52/871, para. 104*)

Those are the words of the Secretary-General. Mobilizing this political will called for by the Secretary-General, the European Union is currently preparing for a summit with the African States in the year 2000. While avoiding overlaps with other existing forums, this summit will offer a unique opportunity to debate political and economic subjects of common interest at the highest political level. In addition, we are pleased to host a ministerial meeting between the European Union and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in Vienna in November 1998. Finally, to have words followed by deeds, the European Union, as the major donor to Africa, contributing two thirds of total official development assistance flows to sub-Saharan Africa, and as the most open market for these countries, is committed to renewing the partnership agreement with the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries and transforming the Lomé Convention into an even more modern and efficient framework for cooperation which will remain strong and prominent in the twenty-first century.

The European Union welcomes the Secretary-General's emphasis on the importance of human rights, democracy and good governance in the process of achieving durable peace and sustainable development throughout the African continent. Since 1995 the European Union has adopted several documents which form the current basis of the European Union policy on violent conflicts in Africa. The European Union is committed to addressing potential trouble spots at a very early stage and to strengthen early-warning capacities. This means a focus on the root causes, like the imbalance of political, socio-economic or cultural opportunities among different identity groups, the lack of legitimacy and effectiveness of governance, the absence of effective mechanisms for the peaceful conciliation of group interests and the lack of a vibrant civil society. Electoral assistance or the deployment of election observers, support in the development of democratic institutions, improved public sector management and the establishment of transparent independent judicial processes, all of which promote the rule of law and economic and financial development, are key priorities in this respect.

The Union believes that Africans must take the lead as well as the main responsibility for the prevention and resolution of violent conflict. At the same time, the international community, including, of course, the European Union, cannot be indifferent and will not be indifferent to events in Africa. The Union actively supports efforts to enhance African capacities and means of action in the field of conflict prevention and resolution, in particular through support for initiatives of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and subregional organizations. Post-conflict reconstruction and peace-building aimed at the prevention of future conflicts is more than repairing physical infrastructure. The purpose of peace-building efforts is to address the root causes of violent conflicts in a targeted manner. In this respect, development cooperation has to play an important role.

The European Union fully shares the view of the Secretary-General that protecting human rights and in particular political rights and economic freedoms, promoting transparency and accountability in public administration and fighting corruption are not merely crucial in building peace and promoting development, but are indeed prerequisites.

The dramatic and unacceptable deterioration in the adherence to international humanitarian law and its underlying principles in violent conflicts, afflicting civilians and humanitarian personnel, equally calls for a solution. Ninety per cent of
casualties in today's violent conflicts are civilian, the majority of them women and children. The European Union wants to draw attention to the social and economic consequences of violent conflict on women, and reiterates that a gender perspective has to be fully taken into consideration. The European Union fully endorses the Secretary-General's notion of children as "zones of peace", and calls upon all States and parties to conflicts to respect existing international standards, to stop the use of children as combatants and to fully support the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children in Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu.

The adoption of the Statute of the International Criminal Court, which the European Union worked so hard to achieve, is a significant step forward in bringing to justice those responsible, and therefore ending a culture of impunity. The Union considers the adoption of the Statute a milestone achievement, and once more urges all Member States to speedily ratify the Statute, in order for the Court to come into operation as soon as possible.

Humanitarian action has to address humanitarian needs and has to facilitate recovery and reconstruction efforts. The Union welcomes the specific recommendations made by the Secretary-General, which should be followed up collectively. In this context, the

Union draws attention to the proposals contained in the European Commission's working document on "Security of Relief Workers and Humanitarian Space" to limit the flow of arms into conflict-prone areas before and during conflict; to understand the economic dynamics of war and the danger of feeding the war machine through aid and trade policies; and to use humanitarian assistance to strengthen local structures and increase self-sufficiency. The Commission also proposed that humanitarian aid has to respect international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles, that humanitarian activities have to encompass human rights and that foreign policy should provide the framework for humanitarian action and be consistent with humanitarian objectives.

The European Union is currently engaged in the implementation of the European Union Programme for Preventing and Combating Illicit Trafficking in Conventional Arms. The Union welcomes the regional efforts to combat the illicit transfer and excessive accumulation of small arms emanating from Africa and stands ready to cooperate with those initiatives.

In the aftermath of conflict, humanitarian assistance must be a step towards development, and must be delivered to promote long-term development objectives. In this phase, a mix of activities and partnerships is needed. Development planning should be undertaken already during a conflict with the aim of building a constituency for peace and stability. In this respect more sophisticated consolidated appeals and strategic frameworks would be of essential importance.

The struggle against widespread poverty in Africa continues to be one of the biggest challenges of our time. The growth already achieved must be maintained and accelerated. To be fair and lasting, it must benefit all sections of society, taking into account environmental concerns.

The European Union remains committed to the struggle against poverty and the goal of halving the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by 2015. The Secretary-General's report contains the bold vision required to translate the current recovery into a lasting transformation that will set Africa on a course of sustainable human development.

Like the Secretary-General, we believe that there is reason to stress the particular importance of certain aspects of proper management of public affairs. We also agree with the Secretary-General that if we wish to achieve sustainable development there is a need for a basic strategy centred, *inter alia*, on macroeconomic stability and a stable investment environment, and that further economic reform measures are also called for.

In the context of a renewed partnership with Africa, the European Union is committed to the general strategy recommended in the report. True partnership implies reciprocal commitments. We welcome the increased efforts of African Governments to promote an enabling environment for investment, economic growth that will benefit the poor, social progress and private sector development. We are prepared to step up to the greatest extent possible our support for countries engaged in such processes, in particular with regard to the reform of institutional and legal frameworks and the improvement of public service efficiency. It is of fundamental importance that the countries involved have control over and responsibility for their development and reform strategies. Formulas based on participatory approaches and consultation mechanisms are also essential for success. In addition, we welcome the call for regional integration of African countries, and we are prepared to lend such integration our continuous support.

The European Union also wishes to emphasize the importance it attaches to incorporating ecological concerns into all strategies designed to ensure sustainable development. In the current African context, the subject of desertification is of particular concern.

The European Union welcomes the fact that the report singles out social development. Human and social development is synonymous with a people-oriented approach, and therefore should be at the centre of the design and implementation of macroeconomic policies. Economic progress must benefit all members of society. It is still of the utmost importance to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and girls in Africa. In this context, the European Union is committed to developing a political dialogue with its African partners on these issues, and is incorporating a perspective of gender equality into the regulations and guidelines that govern its development cooperation programmes. Finally, a sufficiently high level of financial resources, in particular for basic health and education services, must be secured through such mechanisms as the 20/20 Initiative launched in Copenhagen. In this context, we welcome the Secretary-General's comment in paragraph 27 of the report, stressing that

"Africa's compelling development interests require that a minimum of resources be diverted for military purposes."

External debt continues to be a serious impediment to sustainable development for many poor developing countries. The Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative provides a good opportunity to bring the debt back to a sustainable level, and should be speedily extended to more countries on the terms agreed upon. On top of the debt relief already granted within the framework of the Paris Club and on a national basis, in particular through the cancellation of official bilateral debt and debt conversion arrangements, the European Union will fully participate in the HIPC Initiative in order to alleviate the debt burden of the poorest countries.

Given that 99 per cent of Community imports originating in sub-Saharan African countries already benefit from preferential, duty-free access in the context of the Lomé Convention, enhancing their position in the European market will primarily have to be achieved through improving their competitiveness and the production and export capacities of the African economies. To this end, the European Union is aiming, in its negotiations with the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries, formally opened on 30 September, to progressively transform the old form of trade cooperation into a real economic partnership.

The report of the Secretary-General stresses the need to reorient international aid, with a view to reducing the dependency of the partner countries, promoting the implementation of the primary objectives of social development and increasing the competitiveness of African economies. Concerned to establish genuine partnership, the European Union is basing its assistance on the following principles: control of processes by Governments; shared responsibility and participation; dialogue; contractual relations rather than conditionality; fulfilment of mutual obligations; and a flexible approach adapted to partners' level of development, needs and long-term development strategy.

The European Union is the world's leading source of development assistance to Africa, providing more than two thirds of total official development assistance flows to sub-Saharan Africa. Development assistance remains a vital complement to the policies pursued by the African countries. We are actively involved in improving operational coordination of development cooperation both among ourselves and with partner Governments and other international development actors, such as the United Nations system. It is also crucial to ensure greater coherence between our development policy and other policies likely to affect the developing countries.

Allow me, in conclusion, to reaffirm that the European Union fully supports the Secretary-General's call for concrete action on the part of both the African countries and the international community to create a new momentum for peace and development in Africa. The international community cannot be indifferent to events in Africa. For the European Union, Africa's sustainable development is a priority. The commitment of the European Union to Africa is based on shared interests, values and objectives. We wish to help Africa to achieve peace, stability and sustainable development, in order to improve the quality of life of its people.

Finally, the European Union is ready to begin discussion with interested delegations on how the General Assembly can respond to the report of the Secretary-General that is before us.

Mr. Petrella (Argentina) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: It is an honour for Argentina and for me personally to speak so early in this important debate, and while you, Sir, the representative of an African country, are in the Chair.

I wish to thank the Secretary-General for his pragmatic and objective report on the causes of conflict in Africa. With its integrated and comprehensive approach, it shows clearly that economic and social development are not possible without the right environment of peace and stability. At the same time, the report makes it plain that until the basic needs of human beings are met, and as long as deep inequalities persist, there will always be a threat of conflict.

The Secretary-General does not limit himself to merely analysing the historical and current sources of conflict in Africa: he offers specific proposals designed to overcome them. We have already started down that path. With regard to peace and security, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the subregional organizations have strengthened their conflict prevention mechanisms and early warning systems and have played a crucial role in the return of democratic institutions in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Regional efforts aimed at bringing about the peaceful resolution of outstanding conflicts are being carried out intelligently and in a spirit of conciliation. Similarly, African contingents are participating actively in the United Nations Mission in the

Central African Republic (MINURCA) with the aim of consolidating that country's democratic process, as well as in other peacekeeping operations, and they are doing so with a high degree of dedication and professionalism.

For its part, the Security Council, heeding the appeal of the Secretary-General, has held two ministerial-level meetings in one year and has created an ad hoc Working Group under resolution 1170 (1998). That Working Group has already recommended specific measures to make arms embargoes more effective and to strengthen Africa's peacekeeping capacity. We encourage the ad hoc Working Group to continue its work and to present recommendations on three very important issues: the need to curb illicit flows of weapons; the adoption of measures designed to help host Governments preserve the security and neutrality of refugee camps; and enhancing the capacity of the Security Council to supervise activities authorized by it but carried out by Member States or coalitions of Member States.

With regard to economic and social development, we can attest that most African countries are making efforts to strengthen their democratic institutions, promote human rights and reform their economies. However, as the Secretary-General has stated, the heavy burden of external debt and the decline in the prices of their export products are hindering their incorporation into an increasingly globalized world. The international community, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization must do their utmost to ensure that those obstacles do not prove insurmountable. In particular, the United Nations should follow the lead of the Secretary-General and speak for the most disadvantaged, smallest and weakest countries. Its role in promoting development should be focused mainly on those countries. Any approach that takes a different course should first be carefully evaluated. The principle of good international citizenship entails minimum levels of development, and the most prosperous among us should maintain our commitment to its achievement.

In keeping with this approach, Argentina has made the greatest possible efforts to promote those two objectives. At the multilateral level, together with interested African countries, we have worked for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the South Atlantic. Furthermore, on 21 and 22 October this year, Argentina will host the fifth ministerial meeting of the members of the Zone of Peace and Cooperation of the South Atlantic, which comprises 21 African States and three Latin American States committed to the principles of territorial integrity, the peaceful settlement of disputes, the rule of law and human and social development.

With regard to peacekeeping operations, Argentina currently has a presence in Angola and Western Sahara. We again reaffirm our offer to provide training through the training centre for peacekeepers in Buenos Aires.

In the area of humanitarian assistance, Argentina has, through the "White Helmets" initiative, carried out mine clearance tasks in Angola. We also have plans to participate in mine clearance and health care activities in Somalia and have undertaken to deliver and distribute food aid in Sierra Leone with the assistance of the "White Helmets".

In this same spirit of solidarity, through the Argentine horizontal cooperation fund we are putting into effect a set of mutual cooperation programmes with various African countries in areas as diverse as training in agriculture and livestock, pest eradication, computerization and reform of the State. On 4 and 5 May, in Harare, Zimbabwe, a seminar on State reform was held, with the aim of having a mutual exchange of experiences. The seminar was attended by high-level officials from Angola, Namibia, Malawi, Lesotho, Mozambique, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Argentina.

We are also convinced that electoral monitoring mechanisms are an important tool for strengthening democratic systems and good governance. Argentina sent electoral observers to the first election in South Africa based on free and universal suffrage, which put an end to apartheid, to the referendum on self-determination in Eritrea and to the legislative elections held in Algeria in June 1997. We are ready to offer our cooperation in the future if interested States so request.

The report of the Secretary-General truly challenges us to seek concrete and realistic solutions. Faced with this challenge, which extends to everyone — to the African leadership and to the international community — we cannot remain indifferent to the situation of the men and women of Africa. We have a moral responsibility to act and to do so without delay.

Mr. Hasmy (Malaysia): We meet today in this Assembly to deliberate upon an issue of vital importance to the international community as a whole. The question is how to avert further conflict and to promote confidence-building measures, as well as sustainable development, in Africa. This item was debated earlier

this year in the Security Council following the issuance of a report by the Secretary-General on 13 April 1998. Many delegations which spoke in the Council urged that the matter also be considered by the larger membership in the General Assembly and in the Economic and Social Council. My delegation noted with keen interest the further consideration of this question by the Security Council last month.

We commend the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report issued in April this year and for his succinct and focused introduction to the subject this morning, which provides a framework for this important debate.

Against the backdrop of recent convulsions in the African continent, no endeavour is more important and urgent than a sincere and concerted international effort to close the chapter of violence which has traumatized the majority of the people of the African continent for so long. My delegation notes with concern the serious deterioration in the situation in some parts of Africa in the last six months since the issuance of the Secretary-General's report.

There has unfortunately been a steady and alarming decline in the quality of life in Africa since the 1980s. African economies, already the weakest and the most fragile in the world, have been further undermined by continuing civil strife in many parts of the continent. Globalization has also caused some of the African economies to be further marginalized. As a developing country, Malaysia fully sympathizes with the plight of our brothers and sisters in Africa.

The initiative by the United Nations aimed at confidence-building and promoting common security and development in Africa is a major step in the right direction. The goal that we seek in this endeavour should be lasting peace and security. We should assist the African economies to grow, relieve the millions of poor from disease, poverty and hunger and encourage the peoples of the affected regions in Africa to fully utilize their potential to provide a better future for their children. We should endeavour to conceive a concrete strategy that identifies specific measures to be pursued towards meeting that objective. My delegation recognizes that the primary responsibility lies in the hands of the Governments and the States of Africa themselves. They have the right and obligation to take charge of their own destinies. However, the international community can and should assist them when called upon to do so.

The alarming frequency of armed conflict clearly calls for a commitment on the part of all concerned to make every effort to settle disputes by peaceful means. Diplomacy cannot work miracles, especially when one party to a dispute believes it stands to gain from resort to force. Thus, all of us, African or non-African, should reaffirm the universal commitment to the spirit of Article 33 of the United Nations Charter and the pursuit of all possible peaceful means to prevent armed conflict and the outbreak of war in respect of Africa. It is especially important that States outside of Africa honour this commitment and not take unilateral actions which could further endanger the peace and security situation in Africa.

Malaysia shares the view that lasting peace and security on the African continent can be assured only through long-term measures. A comprehensive and determined approach in the quest for peace in Africa, as in the rest of the world, must necessarily include the eradication of poverty, promotion of democracy, development of good governance, sustainable development and the establishment of the rule of law and respect for human rights. However, we must accept that any measure taken should take full cognizance of the peculiar situation of each country or region.

Efforts at preventing armed conflict should continue in parts of Africa where the potential for conflict remains high. My delegation welcomes the recent adoption of Security Council resolutions 1196 (1998) and 1197 (1998) aimed at strengthening both the effectiveness of arms embargoes in conflict areas and the African peacekeeping capacity. We agree with the Secretary-General's assertion that the uncontrolled flow of arms increases tension and insecurity in potential conflict areas and destabilizes the continent. However, if these resolutions are to be effective, efforts have to be stepped up to ensure full compliance.

We wish to reiterate our support for efforts to further intensify cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations in early warning systems and preventive diplomacy. We commend the role played by the Organization of African Unity in averting potential conflicts in Africa. The role played by various African subregional organizations — namely, the Economic Community of West African States in Liberia and Sierra Leone, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development in Somalia and southern Sudan and the Southern African Development Community in the Democratic Republic of the Congo as well as the Community of Portuguese-

Speaking Countries in Guinea-Bissau — deserves our support and commendation. These organizations, however, require the full backing of the international community to enable them to undertake preventive diplomacy in accordance with their expressed mandate within the provisions of the United Nations Charter.

The subject of sanctions continues to be a matter of great concern to United Nations Member States. My delegation strongly feels that sanctions should be applied with great caution and should be resorted to only in cases of extreme necessity, when other peaceful options provided for in the Charter have been proved inadequate. Sanctions cannot be used as an instrument for promoting the narrow national interests of individual Member States. Sanctions, when deemed absolutely necessary, should have specific objectives, be clearly targeted and have specific time-frames so as to reduce humanitarian costs. They should be subject to periodic reviews with a view to their early termination when they have served their specific purpose. My delegation also believes that the Security Council, the General Assembly and other relevant organs of the United Nations should intensify efforts to address the special economic problems of third countries affected by sanctions regimes. My delegation notes with regret that quite a number of African States have been affected by ongoing sanctions. Efforts must be made to reduce the direct and indirect burdens brought about by such sanctions regimes upon third countries, particularly those in Africa.

Peace and security are inextricably linked to the promotion of development. No business concern would want to invest in countries where capital is not protected and where markets cannot thrive and prosper. Political stability is a critical factor in attracting foreign direct investment and capital essential for development and growth. In the absence of such conditions, many of the developing countries in Africa would find it impossible to embark upon serious development programmes. They will have to continue to depend on official development assistance, which, unfortunately, has been declining in recent years. My delegation urges the developed countries to increase the volume and quality of official development assistance to those African countries that badly need such assistance. Malaysia also supports the call for greater access for African products into international markets. It is estimated that a minimum growth rate of at least 6 per cent per annum is required if Africa is to avoid continued marginalization and to begin to attain sustainable development. It is thus very important also that the multilateral financial institutions give priority to efforts aimed at boosting the economic potential of the African countries.

Of equal importance is the need to reduce Africa's debt burden to more manageable levels. My delegation supports the call by the Secretary-General for the consideration of converting into grants official bilateral debts owed by the poorest African nations. This is critical if Africa is to progress in the long term. Such debts impede public investment in physical infrastructure and human resources. They also impede foreign direct investment. We note that the 1998 report of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development states that Africa owes the international community a total of $256 billion. It is unfortunate that some African countries have got into debt as a result of high spending related to arms purchases. It is of course the right of States to provide for adequate defence and security. However, it may be worth while for African States to consider reducing substantially their defence budgets and, in particular, arms purchases. My delegation recognizes that this may be difficult to implement initially, but it is necessary in order to inculcate a new culture of peace in Africa. A strong commitment to that objective could assist in bringing about greater confidence on the part of its external partners, thus helping to attract badly needed foreign investment and assistance.

Malaysia's interest in Africa and the well-being of its people is not a recent development. Since its independence Malaysia has maintained very cordial and long-standing relations with countries in North Africa as well as with countries in sub-Saharan Africa. We have rejoiced in African successes and empathized with the pain and suffering of the people of Africa. The friendship that has developed is certainly based on a strong sense of solidarity and partnership. Four years into our independence, Malaysian soldiers participated in United Nations peacekeeping operations in the Congo. We have been able to apply lessons learned there to our further participation in some 18 other United Nations peacekeeping operations the world over, including eight in Africa. Today, Malaysian soldiers and policemen are present in the United Nations Observer Mission in Angola and in the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara. In the past, Malaysia's involvements in Africa included the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia, the United Nations Transition Assistance Group in Namibia, the United Nations Operation in Mozambique and the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II).

Malaysia values its association and collaboration with the African countries at the United Nations, in the Non-Aligned Movement, in the Group of 77, in the Organization of the Islamic Conference and in other organizations and forums. We have cooperated on many issues, such as the debt problem, increased trade and investment, commodities, South-South and North-South cooperation and questions relating to global peace and security.

In a spirit of South-South cooperation, Malaysia has since 1981 been engaged in a technical cooperation programme with our partners in the South. We are pleased that the programme has been well received by some 99 developing countries. To date, more than 3,600 participants, mainly from Africa, have undergone technical training and various short-term courses in Malaysia. We hope that the participants and their countries have benefitted from this programme. Despite our current economic situation, we remain committed to continuing to carry out this programme.

With certain African countries Malaysia has also developed economic relations based on the concept of smart partnership. We endeavour to promote economic activities in a sound and sustainable manner to ensure that fair and mutually beneficial win-win relationships can be forged. High priority is accorded to encouraging more trade and investment. A number of African leaders and corporate figures have given similar priority to this concept. A process of dialogue has been established through the Langkawi International Dialogue, the Southern African International Dialogue process and the Group of 15 forum.

We believe that through such efforts we and our partners in Africa can learn from our varied experiences in governance and socio-economic development. Through this process we can promote a greater and deepening sense of empathy and fraternity among leaders in both government and the private sector in the South. Malaysia's relationship with the African continent is part of our long-term commitment to working together on the basis of shared interests and mutual respect. We fully recognize and believe in the enormous potential of Africa.

The international community has a responsibility to maintain a strong interest in and commitment to Africa. We must work together with renewed vigour and in a spirit of partnership. Despite the difficulties and obstacles, the quest for lasting peace and security must be relentlessly pursued in the African continent. There is an urgent need to implement the important decisions relevant to Africa that have been made in various United Nations organs and conferences. My delegation pledges Malaysia's continued commitment to working for peace and development in Africa in the spirit of South-South cooperation and in solidarity with the people of Africa.

Mr. Baali (Algeria) (*interpretation from French*): Less than six months ago the Secretary-General submitted a very rich report that, for the first time, clearly and lucidly analysed the long-standing and new problems affecting Africa, their underlying causes, and ways and means of tackling them. It was in fact at the request of the Security Council — which met at the ministerial level last year to consider the desirability of concerted international action to promote international peace and security in Africa, which attested to the growing interest of the United Nations in the stability and economic and social development of Africa — that the Secretary-General undertook to prepare that comprehensive and thorough report on the state of a continent with which he has particularly close ties, as he is himself a distinguished son of Africa. We are convinced that his report will help the international community better to understand Africa and better to gauge its ambitions and aspirations, and thus to respond to its expectations. Now that the report is before the General Assembly, it is important that the Assembly give it the time and attention needed for serious, thorough consideration, in particular of the portions of the report that relate to it specifically.

Before turning to a few specific aspects of the report, I should like, as I did before the Security Council, to recall a number of historical facts. While it is true that Africa now faces problems that are both serious and complex, it is also true that it is a continent that possesses hope and a future, that has committed itself to the path of recovery, and that, provided that it can find and be given the means, will be able to tackle the challenges before it.

While it is a continent beset by fratricidal conflicts — in which it is not unique — whose causes and origins the Secretary-General has lucidly analysed, did it not immediately following independence try to prevent territorial disputes by endorsing the borders it had inherited from the colonial period? Did it not take charge, better than any other region, of dealing with conflict by setting up the Central Organ of the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, whose assistance is in constant demand and whose usefulness has been amply confirmed?

Is it not true that the sources of these conflicts date back to that bleak period of African history when, having aroused the greed of the Powers of the day, Africa was sliced up and vivisected to satisfy colonial appetites, its borders arbitrarily drawn, its populations divided and scattered, and the age-old balance that had always sustained it brutally and irretrievably smashed? Is it not now suffering the consequences of this dismemberment and paying the price for the divide-and-rule policy of the colonial Powers — which, stoking and fuelling clan, tribal and regional rivalries, disrupted the building of national cohesion and paved the way for the tribalism and clan mentality that now seriously afflict Africa?

Likewise, even if underdevelopment, disease and poverty are rife, has Africa not committed itself to the bold and ambitious undertaking of consolidating democracy and the rule of law, which has already yielded promising results, and of reforming, restoring and restructuring the economy, which in many cases is marked by new growth, although at an unsustainable cost in social terms?

If Africa lags so far behind, that is because it had to start with virtually nothing: during the colonial period it was, at the worst, nothing more than a reservoir of natural resources ripe for plundering and of laughably cheap labour to be exploited and, if necessary, to be killed for unknown reasons, and, at the best, an immense territory in which order and security had to be maintained, and in which it was therefore not absolutely necessary — despite all the moralizing speeches — to build the infrastructure, hospitals, schools and factories that were desperately needed by the people who in those days were called "the natives". When Africa regained its independence and vowed to rely on its own strength to create the right conditions for recovery, it was obliged to do this in the worst possible conditions: it had to fit in to an international order based on relations of domination and marked by inequity in opportunities and iniquity in trade.

Finally, in what is by no means the least of its efforts, Africa provided itself with an organization whose credo is unity, and an economic community whose goal is the integration of all its economies. What more vivid proof could there be of the progressive and irreversible realization of this great plan for unity than the fact that so many African countries, as a first step towards the unification of the continent, have joined together at the regional level in political and economic groupings in order to better pool their efforts and to take advantage of their complementarity?

The greatest challenge Africa must face today is obviously underdevelopment, along with everything it implies. How to take up that challenge is clear: Africa must be supported in its recovery efforts. That means that the international community should go beyond the initiatives it has already undertaken and the efforts to which it has agreed — the results of which have clearly not matched the hopes invested in them. The results of United Nations action in this regard — whether through the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s or the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa — have been limited because the funds allocated have never reached the desired levels, because official assistance has targeted sectors that have no real impact on development, because programmes have been designed without consulting the parties concerned — which is to say, Africans — and, finally, because they were executed in an unsuitable domestic and international environment.

With regard to experiences in international cooperation and development assistance in Africa, in many cases — although not all — these have been mere pretences rather than expressions of genuine desire to assist Africa in starting its recovery. Still worse, they have at times merely served to deepen Africa's dependence and exacerbated its marginalization.

The General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Bretton Woods institutions are jointly called on today to contribute to the thinking process on the methods to be used to help Africa achieve recovery. Without genuine mobilization on the part of the financial institutions and United Nations agencies centred on a wide-ranging and ambitious programme of support for Africa that coherently and comprehensively addresses the questions of investment, development assistance, external debt, trade and the negative effects of structural adjustment policies, any policy targeting Africa will be doomed to failure and will be a hollow gesture.

The other problem Africa is facing with the same faith and determination is the proliferation of conflicts on its soil. In this respect, it seems to us vital for the United Nations to strengthen its cooperation with the Organization of African Unity in handling these conflicts, as that organization knows and understands their causes better than any other body. The Central Organ of the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution is in this regard a valuable tool which should be fully utilized. In addition, the international community

has a duty to demonstrate solidarity with and assume its unshirkable responsibilities towards Africa.

Preventive diplomacy is another aspect related to the handling of conflicts. Like peacekeeping operations and the delivery of humanitarian assistance, it should be subject to the consent of the State concerned and depend, therefore, on its cooperation.

Respect for the sovereignty of States and the need to have their consent are all the more important because of the susceptibility of humanitarian assistance to exploitation for political purposes. Such assistance has sometimes been diverted in ways that have gravely undermined it both in principle and in the field. Furthermore, it seems to us essential to keep in mind that humanitarian assistance cannot and should not represent an alternative to preventing or settling conflicts any more than it should be a way of salving one's conscience or an excuse for inaction.

Lastly, I should like to comment on the question of the proliferation of weapons. In this regard, Algeria is compelled to note its interest in the proposal to reduce arms and munitions expenditures to 1.5 per cent of gross domestic product. Likewise, we can only welcome the Secretary-General's proposal regarding compiling, tracking and publicizing of information on arms traffic, which fuels large-scale crime and terrorism. If this undertaking is to be effective it should be handled by the Department for Disarmament Affairs and be part of resolute and relentless international cooperation designed to break up the arms-supply networks that support terrorist groups in their undertakings of destruction and death.

The Secretary-General has given us a report filled with ideas and recommendations that must now be translated into actions. By creating a Working Group to implement the recommendations within its purview, the Security Council demonstrated the serious approach it intends to take in handling African issues and the determination that inspires it. The Assembly can do no less than the Council. It, too, must implement and follow up the recommendations that fall within its area of competence. It has the will to do so; it should equip itself with the means.

Mr. Shervani (India): May I compliment the Secretary-General for undertaking a thorough and comprehensive review of the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa in his report (A/52/871), which was submitted to the Security Council in April this year as document S/1998/318. The report has succinctly brought out the complex interplay of factors, forces and events that have had an important bearing on developments in Africa this century. While acknowledging that there has been significant economic and political progress in recent years, the report has noted that in many parts of the vast continent progress remains threatened or impeded by conflict.

Africa holds a special place in our hearts. India and Africa are inextricably and intimately bound by ties of history, with age-old commercial and civilizational links. We have both been victims of disempowerment, deprivation and exploitation through the colonial experience. We are joined by our struggle for freedom. We both face gargantuan development challenges. What happens in Africa is of abiding concern to us.

The Secretary-General has dwelt at some length on the various factors that have contributed to the situation obtaining in parts of Africa. Most of Africa has suffered the ravages of ruthless colonial exploitation. The consequences have been compounded by challenges in nation-building, in development of economic capacities — particularly in agriculture and small and medium-sized industry — and in distributive disparities. However, Africa's situation is not unique. A number of countries around the globe have suffered from similar circumstances and can identify with the challenges facing Africa.

What resurgent Africa did not receive, as devastated Europe did, was an infusion of resources matching its needs. Its development has been stymied by a paucity of financial resources. Development assistance and value-added exports, the engines of economic recovery, represent but a trickle in that vast continent. The question of sustained development is central to the problems faced by all developing countries, whether in Africa or elsewhere. The totality of this challenge needs to be addressed comprehensively, effectively and urgently. It is organs such as the General Assembly, as well as the Bretton Woods institutions, that can address it in a sustained and meaningful manner in all its elements.

Africa is not, and must not be seen as, inherently unstable and riven by conflict. The efforts of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and other subregional organizations to broker peace and meaningfully address the root causes of conflicts are an encouraging development. The long-term objectives of development adopted by the OAU in the Lagos Plan of

Action of April 1980 remain largely unfulfilled. A recent study by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) noted that the emphasis on structural adjustment by the international financial institutions did not address the removal of structural weaknesses in national capacities, in production and trade structures and in transport and rural infrastructure, which produced macroeconomic disequilibrium. Persuasive analysis has demonstrated that decline or stagnation in parts of Africa has been caused by a combination of domestic pressures, external shocks and an artificial and extraneous adjustment model foisted upon them. It is against this background that we should consider whether omnibus solutions, however well-meaning, can be an answer to the real needs of Africa.

Globalization has brought in its wake manifold problems, especially in developing countries. A greater reliance on market forces and a reduction in the scope of governance has weakened the State as an institution, resulting in social and economic pressures on large sections of society. While this may not be a permanent condition, Governments must have the funds to pay for social support systems in this transitional phase. Failure to do so invites aggravated tensions and an undermining of fragile democratic structures. That countries in transition need massive financial support to pre-empt pressures and to secure democracy has been recognized in Eastern Europe; it is unfortunate that Africa, which, as the Secretary-General's analysis points out, is in a comparable situation, does not receive anywhere near the same support.

The Secretary-General has made several important and far-reaching suggestions in the section on humanitarian assistance. We would like to reiterate our serious concern over the significant decline in levels of funding for humanitarian assistance, both in absolute terms and as a proportion of programme requirements. The perception that this decline could be related to the political significance of crises or levels of media interest needs to be corrected. That this decline has been mostly felt in respect of consolidated appeals for countries of the African continent is a matter that deserves our priority attention. We therefore strongly support the earlier proposals of the Secretary-General to undertake a comprehensive review of the funding of humanitarian programmes, including, *inter alia*, the relationship between funding provided for emergencies and resources made available for development programming. We hope that the consolidated reports by the Humanitarian Affairs Coordinator on implications of underfunding, including forced changes in priorities and cancellation of activities, will be an important first step in ensuring that adequate assistance is available to those in need.

We cannot overemphasize the central need for generating economic growth in Africa. The elements of effective, transparent and accountable governance, responsive to the needs and priorities of the governed, are being put in place, as are decentralization and the taking of decisions at those levels where they have the greatest effect. We see the process as an integral one, where improvements in one sphere positively contribute to the growth of another. Rendering all assistance and investment secondary to the promotion and protection of human rights will of necessity fail in achieving the primary purpose, which is the promotion of widespread prosperity in larger freedom.

Furthermore, it has been our consistent belief to discourage modes of thought that seek to portray civil society and non-governmental organizations in opposition to the Government. We would like to see them in a collaborative and cooperative mode, building on the complementarities which exist between them for the benefit of the people of Africa.

We fully support the view of the Secretary-General, as expressed in paragraph 80 of document A/52/871, that without growth there can be no sustained increase in household or government spending, in private or public capital formation, in health or social welfare. After all, distributive justice cannot imply distribution of poverty, just as sustainable development cannot mean sustenance of poverty and deprivation. In this regard, we favour the emphasis placed by the Secretary-General on export led growth. But we are constrained to point out that rising levels of protectionism in developed country markets, the frequent and unjustified use of anti-dumping duties and countervailing measures, and tariff escalation and tariff peaks tend to negate the comparative advantages of developing countries and the competitive advantage of their enterprises. The international community would need to act in concert to ensure that market access to products and manufactured goods from Africa is available as an integrated element of a benign cycle we wish to see set in motion.

Africa's problems deserve special attention. The Secretary-General has focused on the issues at hand candidly and in some detail and has also suggested remedial action. In this regard, Prime Minister Vajpayee, while addressing the Non-Aligned Movement's summit in Durban last month, asked the Movement to examine the

usefulness of an international conference or a special session of the General Assembly to focus on the special needs of Africa. I reiterate this suggestion for the consideration by the Assembly.

In this twentieth anniversary year of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action, the Government of India wishes to reaffirm its commitment to constructive and productive South-South cooperation, especially with Africa. To date, approximately 20,000 foreign participants have been trained in India under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme. The Programme now extends to over 110 countries, encompassing areas such as informatics, biotechnology, conventional and non-conventional energy sources, agriculture, small-scale industry, telecommunications, natural-disaster prevention, relief and rehabilitation, and others. Several countries in Africa have been our valued partners in the promotion of this cooperation. Agreements on cooperation have also been concluded with regional bodies such as the Southern African Development Community. We propose to continue further in this direction, expanding both the scope and the coverage of our cooperation with them.

Mr. Yel'chenko (Ukraine): It is an honour for me to take part at an early stage in the discussion of an issue which is so important for the future of Africa.

I think we should commend the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on this agenda item and his continued efforts to accelerate the settlement of conflicts in this part of the world and to promote peace and development on the African continent.

This is the third time during the current session of the General Assembly that the situation in Africa is being considered in the main United Nations bodies. In our view, this is yet more convincing evidence that the United Nations continues to attach great importance to the problems of Africa.

Today Africa has reached a very important stage in its development. For almost a decade now, many African countries have been making courageous efforts to build more open societies in which the exercise of political power would rest on democratic values. In some countries of the region the economy has started to emerge from the abyss, and the people there seem to have realized the importance of gaining strength through unity. Through the efforts of individual countries, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and other regional organizations, some of the hot spots and conflicts on the continent have been eliminated or eased.

At the same time, there are still persistent problems which continue to impact negatively the situation in many African countries. As a whole, Africa remains marginalized in the present system of international economic relations. As a result, the situation in most of the continent is still characterized by striking poverty and underdevelopment. Therefore, we as United Nations Member States should not be indifferent observers.

One cannot be indifferent either to the fact, for example, that nearly a third of the 42 countries of the sub-Saharan region are engaged in conflicts or civil wars. In some of them, the vast movements of refugees and displaced persons continue to be an alarming factor that contributes to the internal instability.

Therefore, we strongly believe that the issues of peace, security and stability and the problems of sustainable economic development of Africa should be addressed simultaneously, as they are closely interrelated.

The United Nations should be ready to meet these challenges through its peacekeeping operations, good-offices missions, and the emergency relief programmes. At the same time, broader international efforts, such as the imposition of sanctions, can succeed only if they are complemented by genuine cooperation and support on the part of all countries of the region.

In our view, the leading role in ensuring such cooperation should continue to be played by the Organization of African Unity. It is also imperative that the international community enhance its political, material and technical support to the OAU in order to improve its capabilities for resolving conflict situations within the African framework.

In past years we have witnessed positive examples of preventive and peacekeeping efforts undertaken by subregional organizations in southern Africa, West Africa and the Horn of Africa. Therefore, we support the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report (A/52/871) to improve coordination and the exchange of information between the United Nations and these organizations.

From the very first days of its regained independence, Ukraine has developed cooperation with Africa on the basis of promoting a mutually beneficial

partnership, keeping in view the long-standing traditions and history of its relations with many countries of this continent. The participation of Ukrainian units and observers, as well as Ukrainian transport aircraft, in a number of United Nations peacekeeping operations in Africa is yet further proof of our keen interest in further developing these relations. We are only at the initial stage of this promising cooperation, and I take this opportunity to encourage interested African States to join us in this undertaking.

It is our sincere hope that Africa will eventually overcome the difficulties it is facing today, and that the continent will turn into a region of political stability and steady social and economic progress. It is not an easy task, but it is our common obligation to help Africa in achieving this goal.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): Bangladesh participates in this debate in the General Assembly with a great sense of pride and commitment: pride because of the indomitable spirit of the African people, which has always energized us; commitment because we believe in the cause of peace and development in Africa.

It is from this perspective that Bangladesh wholeheartedly welcomes the report (A/52/871) of the Secretary-General, on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. We note with particular appreciation the Secretary-General's outlining of some initiatives to be pursued both within Africa and by the international community with a view to eliminating the roots of conflict through a variety of sustained economic and social measures. We also welcome warmly the statement made by the Secretary-General at the outset of this debate this morning.

Bangladesh welcomed last April the Security Council pronouncement that a comprehensive response to Africa's complex and interrelated security and development challenges was needed, and its urging the General Assembly, along with other United Nations bodies, regional organizations, international financial institutions and Member States, to consider the recommendations of Secretary-General Kofi Annan and take appropriate action of their own. It was important for Bangladesh to take part in the Security Council's deliberations on that occasion. We are happy that a second ministerial meeting of the Council on the situation in Africa took place on 24 September. We are also pleased to join the call made by the Non-Aligned Movement summit in Durban for the implementation of the recommendations in the Secretary-General's report. We strongly believe that these recommendations can give a new momentum to peace and development in Africa.

We fully share the view expressed by the Secretary-General that the prevention of conflict begins and ends with the promotion of human security and human development. As in other places, conflicts in Africa have their roots in social discrimination, economic deprivation and lack of accountability in the use of political power. At the same time, we believe that the colonial legacy and its continuation in different forms and manifestations still prevent social and political assimilation and the equitable distribution of resources, thus fomenting tensions and conflicts within and among nations. There is little justification for lamenting the human and material loss in conflicts in Africa and elsewhere when political divisions in every society are feeding today's violence.

We find useful the suggestions in part III of the report for addressing the threats to peace and security in Africa. In particular, the Secretary-General's emphasis on the need to seek political solutions to disputes through utilizing the resources of the regional organizations, like the Organization of African Unity, under the direction of the United Nations, is worth considering.

Violations of humanitarian law and the sanctity of human persons, particularly the abuses of the rights of women and children during conflicts is a major problem, and we are happy to see the attention paid to these aspects by the Secretary-General in his report. We would like to commend him for the appointment of a Special Representative on the impact of armed conflict on children, with a view to maintaining a sustained focus on this issue. We fully support the idea of making children a zone of peace during any conflict.

Regarding human rights abuses in conflict situations, we note the Secretary-General's proposal to fund all special human rights missions from the assessed contributions of the Organization. We support the idea that the rights of all civilians, including relief workers in situations of armed conflict, should be respected and protected.

A fair degree of consensus exists these days on the idea that Governments should be politically accountable and socially responsible, as well as pro-people, based on the rule of law and respect for the dignity of human persons. In this context, we find merit in the suggestions

on various aspects of good governance made by the Secretary-General in his report.

Development is indeed a human right, and it is central to the prospects of reducing conflict in Africa. We believe that lack of development is the source of all conflict in Africa, and therefore the international community needs to encourage African countries to focus on development, with particular emphasis on investing in the social sector. As the Secretary-General has said, investment in human resources must be recognized not merely as a by-product of economic growth, but also as a driving force for development. It is also an essential component in eliminating poverty, which feeds all discontent, and hatred. As my colleague from Zimbabwe said in the Security Council debate, "the seed of democracy cannot germinate, let alone thrive, in the soil of mass poverty, illiteracy, hunger and disease". *(S/PV.3875, p. 32)*

Here we believe that investment in the education of girls has a most effective return. Indeed, in Bangladesh we have seen how investment in women's and girls' education and empowerment, through an elaborate network of micro-credit and other support programmes, has transformed them into socially productive resources. We welcome the Secretary-General's recommendation that aid in Africa should be restructured to focus on high-impact areas and to reduce dependency.

No domestic efforts can be successful in the developing countries, in Africa in particular, unless these are matched by equally robust and positive international support. In this context, my delegation fully supports the Secretary-General's call for at least 50 per cent of donors' aid to Africa to be spent there — in Africa. Likewise, we endorse the Secretary-General's call to all bilateral creditors to convert into grants all their remaining bilateral debt to the poorest African countries. We also support his call to the Bretton Woods institutions to provide peace-friendly structural adjustment programmes.

In addition to debt support and capacity-building, market access to products from the less developed African countries is also important. In this connection, we support the idea of enhanced and guaranteed access to developed country markets, as well as improved regional South-South cooperation. Indeed, relatively advanced neighbouring countries could consider providing market access to products from the African least developed countries on a non-reciprocal basis.

Regional and subregional integration can also help overcome single-country handicaps in economic activities. The Secretary-General's suggestions in this regard deserve serious consideration.

Bangladesh's commitment to the well-being of our brothers and sisters in Africa is rooted in a number of compelling factors. Bangladesh has been a major contributor to almost all peacekeeping and peacemaking efforts of the United Nations on the African continent. We have together pursued similar lines of struggle for our independence, and we still share similar values of life and outlook on the contemporary global situation.

On the economic front, most of the African countries are members of the group known as the least developed countries, of which Bangladesh has the honour to serve as coordinator. We therefore share common experiences and common goals in our struggle to foster a stable social order, economic emancipation and political freedom in order to make life meaningful to our peoples.

Let me reaffirm our commitment to see a conflict-free Africa contributing to global peace, security and development in a meaningful way.

Mr. Shen Guofang (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): First of all, on behalf of the Chinese delegation, please allow me to extend our thanks to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for the comprehensive report on Africa that he has submitted to the General Assembly and the Security Council. The report has played an important role in focusing the attention of the international community on Africa. Two Security Council meetings on the report were convened at Foreign Minister level, and some follow-up actions have been taken. We support an in-depth and comprehensive review of the report by the General Assembly.

In the post-cold-war era, the aspiration for peace and stability and the pursuit of development and cooperation have become the main trend on the African continent. Recently, however, the spate of regional conflicts in certain parts of Africa has affected the unity, stability, security and development of the regions and countries concerned and has aroused the concern and attention of the international community.

Africa is vast in area and rich in resources. The African people have made tremendous contributions to the advancement of human civilization. Making up one third of the United Nations membership, the African

countries represent an important political force to be reckoned with. Without stability in Africa, there will be no global peace. Without the development of Africa, world prosperity will not be possible. Therefore, we must look at Africa from the strategic heights of global peace and development, pay real attention to its stability and treat it as an equal partner for development.

The conflicts in Africa, which can be traced back to deep historical roots, are at the same time set in complex present-day realities. To resolve the conflicts and maintain stability on the continent is an important and arduous task for the United Nations. In this connection, we believe that the following two points are crucial.

First, the prerequisite and starting point for settling African conflicts is respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of African countries and abstention from interfering in their internal affairs. We hold that all conflicts and disputes should be settled through peaceful means.

We have taken note that the recent tireless efforts made by some African countries and regional organizations have facilitated the settlement of regional conflicts and have produced tangible results. We believe that the United Nations should increase its involvement and input in Africa, play a constructive role as coordinator in settling African conflicts, and, in tandem with regional efforts, provide necessary and timely assistance to African countries to meet their legitimate and reasonable requests.

Secondly, attention should be given to taking steps to help promote development in Africa. Peace and development rely on and supplement each other and are mutually reinforcing. The promotion of sustainable development of the African economy will help resolve African conflicts and at the same time realize lasting peace in Africa.

The African economy has been looking up in recent years, but the overall reality remains grim. Goals laid down in the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF) are still far from being realized. Despite their multifarious efforts, African countries are still facing the danger of being marginalized in the globalization process. Africa still has a long way to go to achieve its development.

The international community, especially the developed countries, should carry out its commitments in real earnest with regard to funds, debts, markets and goods, and create a favourable external environment for Africa's development.

We support the proposals made in the Secretary-General's report for reducing the debt burden of African countries, opening markets wider to them and helping Africa strengthen regional cooperation. We hope that the organizations concerned will, on the basis of a good understanding and knowledge of Africa, work out a feasible and specific programme that suits the national conditions of African countries. We hope that these two points will be given due attention.

China has always cherished its traditional friendship with the people of Africa and therefore attaches great importance to strengthening its cooperation with the continent in various fields. We have always supported African countries in their efforts to resolve conflicts and establish lasting peace and have always respected their choice of political system and path of development adapted to their national conditions. We will strive to contribute even further to Africa's development by continuing to support the efforts of its countries to develop their national economies and will continue to offer assistance within our capacity, without attaching any political conditions.

Mr. Abulhasan (Kuwait) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I should like at the outset to express my country's satisfaction with the efforts of the United Nations, and in particular of Secretary-General Kofi Annan, to draw serious attention to the dangers of the conflicts raging in Africa. We support his most recent approach to highlight these problems and to formulate appropriate solutions to them on a firm and lasting basis.

This approach has resulted in the Security Council's discharging its main responsibilities for these conflicts, which threaten international peace and security. As a preliminary attempt to help the peoples of Africa to cope with these tragedies and to evaluate the progress made towards establishing peace and security on the continent, it has convened two ministerial meetings in two years to study the causes of conflict in Africa in a transparent and open manner. In this respect, Kuwait declares its support for the most recent presidential statement of the Council, issued at its 3931st meeting on 24 September 1998.

Kuwait fully endorses the recommendations and other contents of the Secretary-General's report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. We associate

ourselves with his analysis of the causes of conflict in Africa. In his report, the Secretary-General points to several factors which are at play in this regard, *inter alia*, the legacy of colonialism, external intervention and economic feebleness.

Kuwait believes, however, that, in the final analysis, the primary responsibility falls to all those who have allowed the residual conflicts to expand and escalate, thus igniting ethnic and tribal hatreds that have ultimately encouraged external elements to interfere in the internal affairs of the African countries. They did so not to accomplish a specific development objective, but to receive military support and impose their domination of Africa's economies without concern for the rights of peoples to enjoy their own natural resources and potentialities in an organized and equitable manner. This had led to the emergence of all the ills which the friendly countries of Africa are seeing today — military conflicts, civil or ethnic wars, and innumerable economic and social problems. All of these issues are the clear results of a lack of concentration, from the outset, on the objective of development. This has led to bloody violence, which has consumed the material and human resources that have characterized a vibrant Africa.

Kuwait is following with great concern the conflicts raging in Africa, a continent linked to Kuwait and its people by ties of particular friendship. We feel great respect and appreciation for the African peoples. Kuwait, alternating with Burkina Faso, leads the Committee for Arab-African dialogue, the objective of which is to ensure cooperation in all areas between African and Arab countries. Kuwait also leads the Committee of Sahelian States to combat desertification and drought and has committed $30 million to it.

On the basis of this friendship, Kuwait has sought to provide development assistance to the peoples of Africa in order to alleviate their sufferings. For example, the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, founded in 1962, has to date provided credits on preferential conditions to 33 African countries, which received 142 loans worth $1,000,560,499. It has also sent 42 technical assistance missions to 25 African States, at a cost of $25 million. The Fund's recent report states that, in 1997, $10 million was provided in the form of grants and technical assistance to the countries of eastern, southern and central Africa, and grants totalling approximately $11 million to those of western Africa. Kuwait has also continued its development support of the African countries through charitable Kuwaiti organizations, a unique role which has been appreciated by the African peoples benefiting from it. Foremost among these organizations is the Africa Muslims Agency, which started off in 1981 by granting assistance and generous support to African countries.

Kuwait is aware of the importance of the African States providing all appropriate conditions which would convince donor and friendly countries of the necessity of continuing to provide all types of assistance needed in the development field. The African States are aware of the importance of the concept of sustainable development primarily through their getting rid of the spectre of war, bloody conflicts and violence, which not only drain Africa's human resources, but also scare off foreign investors who would like to participate in the activation of the development process in Africa in a sincere manner. Thus, the human element and material assistance are the nucleus of success for sustainable development plans throughout the world, particularly in Africa.

Finally, I would like to say that there can be no development without peace and stability. The expectations regarding development require political will, regional integration and cooperation among the African countries to ensure the development of that continent.

Mr. Lee See-Young (Republic of Korea): My delegation has examined with great interest and appreciation the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/52/871. We concur with the Secretary-General in his analysis of the fundamental causes of conflict in Africa. We also endorse his comprehensive recommendations on conflict resolution and the promotion of sustainable development in Africa. As he pointed out, the problems now facing Africa represent the immediate challenges the entire international community must address with a sense of urgency. The solutions to these problems require the mobilization of the collective political will of all nations. I hope that today's debate on Africa will give us an opportunity to create a blueprint for how the international community can best help Africa achieve peace and development.

Since the 1970s, the Government of the Republic of Korea has given high priority to the promotion of cooperative relations with African countries in the spirit of South-South cooperation and solidarity with the people of Africa. My Government has continuously expanded its official development assistance to Africa. More recently, it has participated in a number of United Nations peacekeeping operations in Africa, including United Nations Operation in Somalia II (UNOSOM II), United

Nations Angola Verification Mission III (UNAVEM III) and the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). Our attachment to the issue of Africa became even greater during our recent two-year involvement as a member of the Security Council.

Allow me to make comments on several points contained in the report of the Secretary-General. My first concerns conflict prevention and rapid response to conflicts. We agree that there is an urgent need to strengthen efforts to prevent conflicts through early-warning and preventive action. We welcomed the establishment of the trust fund for preventive action of the Secretary-General and will continue to make contributions to the fund. We hope that contributions to the fund will increase so as to enable the Secretary-General to expand his initiatives to prevent potential conflicts, particularly in Africa.

My delegation also believes that rapid response to conflicts is crucial to containing the intensity of conflicts and alleviating human suffering. One of the most effective ways to reach that end is to build and enhance the peacekeeping capacities of Africa itself. My delegation welcomes the recent move by the United Nations to cultivate closer ties with regional and subregional organizations, such as the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

We wish to take note of the Security Council presidential statement of 16 September 1998, which provides for the ways and means to improve training and exchange of information for African peacekeeping capacity-building. However, the crucial question remains of how to provide logistical support to African troops in the early stages of conflicts. We consider it necessary to examine the possibility of establishing a stand-by arrangement for such logistical support.

Secondly, there is also an urgent need to alleviate human suffering in protracted conflicts, which are rampant in some parts of Africa. Particular attention should be paid to the need for protection for humanitarian assistance in conflict situations. Unfortunately, the security and safety of humanitarian workers are increasingly threatened by numerous acts in violation of international humanitarian law and by the spread of the culture of impunity. In this connection, my delegation strongly endorses the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's follow-up report on this issue to the Security Council last month. We believe that the General Assembly should also look into the report since it touches upon a number of issues within the Assembly's mandate. We sincerely hope that the Secretary-General's recommendations will be translated into concrete action through close collaboration among the relevant organs and agencies of the United Nations.

Furthermore, it is essential to ensure the security and neutrality of refugee camps. Serious thought should be given to how to separate combatants from bona fide refugees and displaced persons. We believe that necessary measures can be taken in a manner proportionate to the intensity of conflict. In this regard, we support the concept of a "ladder of options" proposed by Mrs. Sadako Ogata, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, at the Security Council meeting on 24 April this year.

Third, my delegation believes that the international community should make every effort to halt the arms flow into and within the African continent. We fully support Security Council resolution 1196 (1998) of last month to enhance the effectiveness of arms embargoes already in place. It is equally important that the various recommendations listed in the resolution be effectively implemented. Furthermore, given the cross-border arms movement, country-specific arms embargoes do not suffice to stem the flow of arms. We therefore propose that serious consideration be given to the establishment of a regional or subregional regime to control the arms flow in Africa. Drawing on the experience of the situation in the African Great Lakes region, we also suggest that practical ways be explored to control the movement of armed persons, such as militias and mercenaries.

Last but not least, we share the Secretary-General's emphasis on good governance and sustainable development as fundamentals for long-term peace and prosperity in Africa. According to our own experience, good governance based on respect for democratic principles and human rights better ensures peace, stability and prosperity in the long run.

At the same time, we believe that the international community should step up efforts to resolve the pressing issue of debt relief for African countries and further strengthen development cooperation with the region, bearing in mind the five priority areas the Secretary-General emphasized this morning.

As for my Government, our development cooperation policy will continue to focus on increased

provision of human resource development programmes and grants in the framework of official development assistance. Recognizing the urgent need to facilitate private sector development in Africa and to promote Asian-African interregional cooperation, we plan to host an Asia-Africa trade and investment forum towards the end of this year. We expect that this forum will contribute to encouraging increased trade and investment flows between the two continents.

Conflicts still persist in many parts of the world, including Africa. But the reality we face today is that if we are to fulfil our responsibility for international peace and security, we should give priority to the African continent. World peace will not be complete without peace and sustained development in Africa. We hope, therefore, that our debate on this issue, the first ever in the General Assembly, will create a new momentum for a more constructive and concerted action on the part of both the African countries and the international community. The Republic of Korea reiterates its continued commitment to work for peace and development in Africa in the spirit of solidarity with the people of Africa.

Mr. Elaraby (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to thank the Secretary-General, his assistants and all those who contributed to preparing the report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (A/52/871). This report reflects without doubt the will of the United Nations to absorb the lessons of the past, and it embodies an ambitious vision of the performance of the United Nations in Africa, as well as the political, economic and human issues that Africa will confront in the future, in line with the noble purposes of the United Nations as set forth in the Charter.

The report reflects the close linkage between the causes of conflict in Africa, on the one hand, and the economic and social crises that the continent is undergoing, on the other. Africa is still suffering under the weight of chronic debts, as well as declining official development assistance and the increasing conditionality associated with it. Africa is also suffering from the approach of selectivity of the world's capital flows, which is not often based on objective economic criteria. This is coupled with a deteriorating economic and social situation in many African countries which results from disease and poverty and their attendant economic and social upheavals. Yet our aspirations for the African continent surpass by far the efforts being made at present at the international level to help the countries of the continent, especially the least developed.

In this respect, we wish to reiterate the importance of the General Assembly's role in sensitizing international organizations and economic and financial institutions with regard to Africa's problems, and in urging them to provide the resources needed to help Africa develop its economy and to direct greater attention towards African problems. Egypt endeavours, within its capabilities, to contribute to the process of economic reform through the provision of technical expertise in a variety of fields through the Egyptian fund for African technical cooperation.

The momentum of economic reform in the African countries which aims at greater interaction in the international commercial market should be coupled with interest in Africa's human and social situations. In keeping with this, we associate ourselves with the views expressed in the Secretary-General's report on the importance of the human dimension and the problem of refugees in the African continent. The report indeed highlights the problem of Rwandan refugees in the Great Lakes region and stresses the necessity for the international community to secure firmly and effectively the protection and safety of the refugees and to keep their camps free of any military presence, perhaps through the creation of an international mechanism to help the Governments of the host countries maintain the neutrality and security of the refugee camps.

It is also necessary in regard to these efforts to deal with the other aspects of the refugee problem. Foremost among these are technical assistance and humanitarian assistance to the countries of the region and the amelioration of social and environmental problems. The negative implications for the peace and security of the host country should be contained. The refugee camps must be established away from border areas, and humanitarian assistance should be coordinated between the different organs of the United Nations on the one hand, and the other international aid organizations, especially the International Committee of the Red Cross, on the other.

We welcome the recommendations offered by the Secretary-General in his report of 22 September 1998 concerning protection for the humanitarian assistance given to refugees in situations of conflict. We hope that the Security Council will take the necessary measures in order to implement these recommendations.

Needless to say, efforts aimed at improving economic and social conditions in Africa require parallel efforts regionally and internationally so that the desired effects may be achieved through confronting the African conflicts which still constitute a basic impediment to economic growth and foreign investment in Africa. Therefore, the General Assembly, in tandem with the Security Council, must deal with the African issues and contribute effectively to settling these conflicts and providing various solutions and recommendations relative to these issues.

I wish to turn now to certain more specific remarks, beginning with Somalia. The continued inattention to events in Somalia is unacceptable. The United Nations has to take the initiative to assess developments there and provide possible assistance in order to facilitate the establishment of the national reconciliation and peace that have long been overdue there.

For our part, Egypt supports the efforts being made by all the parties concerned, and we will continue in our efforts to establish peace in Somalia in coordination with the League of Arab States, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and all the other concerned parties. We wish to reconfirm that the efforts to achieve national reconciliation in Somalia are not the monopoly of a certain party. International and regional efforts should be coordinated in order to find a comprehensive and just settlement. In this respect, Egypt stresses the importance of the role of the United Nations in settling the situation, and we call on the United Nations to reactivate its role and fully enforce its ongoing presence there.

There is another issue that the OAU places at the top of its priorities. All the African leaders in their statements before the Assembly this year called for lifting the sanctions against Libya. The Security Council has to move forward in its position on the Lockerbie crisis, especially now that events have been moving in a positive direction. All of us hope that progress will be achieved in good faith by all the parties concerned in the shortest time possible, within the framework of what the Secretary-General and his assistants are doing, with the agreements and required guarantees so that sanctions can be lifted from Libya once and for all. Thus a phase of tension would be terminated, and it is time for that to happen.

Despite the fact that the United Nations has succeeded in contributing to the settlement of many crises in Africa, most recently in Sierra Leone, the African continent still witnesses the emergence and continuation of many crises which have implications for its peace and security. In his report on the work of the Organization, the Secretary-General referred to the continuing violence in the Great Lakes region, appealed to the leaders of Burundi and Rwanda to redouble their efforts to build peace and achieve national unity and called for the necessary measures to enable the United Nations verification team to return to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. That team had been withdrawn following the deterioration of the situation there.

Preventing the spread of arms in Africa is of primary importance and should be treated accordingly. The Secretary-General referred to the fact that the interest in development in Africa requires the allocation of a minimum of resources to military purposes. This could be achieved through enforcing transparency and confidence-building measures in the military and security areas. We agree with his suggestion, as the issue has implications for the preservation of international peace and security. Africa indeed showed particular interest in this field in April 1996 through the conclusion of the Treaty of Pelindaba, which aims at making Africa a nuclear-weapon-free zone, and the adoption of the Cairo Declaration, which included several principles which stress Africa's commitment to the support of international peace and security.

Another aspect of militarization relates to the security of the African continent. The illegal flow of arms, especially small arms, is extremely serious and should be confronted at the national, regional and international levels. The political and military instability that has affected the countries of the Great Lakes region provides the clearest evidence of the consequences of such arms flows in the fomenting of endless conflicts.

In this context, Egypt supports the Secretary-General's proposal relating to confronting this phenomenon through the gathering and dissemination of information about it. The guidelines adopted by the Disarmament Commission two years ago on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, in addition to the recommendations to be presented by the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms set up by the Secretary-General, should provide a framework so that we can take effective steps to stop that serious phenomenon.

Africa today is going through an important historical stage when the values of democracy and respect for

human rights are being consolidated. In this context, Africa also aspires to achieve democracy at the international level. We hope that the reform of the United Nations, including the reform and restructuring of the Security Council, will ultimately lead to justice, democracy and transparency by giving Africa fair representation in the Security Council in accordance with the decisions taken at Harare by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity.

In conclusion, I wish to underline the importance of continuing serious and effective coordination between the United Nations and the OAU, its regional bodies and its Mechanism set up to resolve the problems of the continent along the lines which have already begun. Here I wish to pay tribute to the OAU and its achievements in the past few years. Its role is complementary to that of the United Nations in settling conflicts so that peace and stability may prevail and the means to economic, social and environmental prosperity can be established throughout Africa and elsewhere.

Mr. Babaa (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*interpretation from Arabic*): At the outset, I should like to thank the Secretary-General for the important report he submitted today on this item. I should also like to reaffirm the comments of the representative of Burkina Faso, who spoke on behalf of the Group of African States, in particular his reference to the need to find African solutions to African problems.

One year ago the Security Council held its first ministerial-level meeting to consider the need for concerted international efforts to enhance peace and security in Africa. The Secretary-General, in his report submitted to the Council at that time, said that the scope of the challenges facing Africa extends beyond the Security Council itself. My delegation therefore believes that this discussion gains special importance because it provides a further opportunity for the members of the General Assembly and the whole of the international community to shed more light on the problems of Africa and to consider them in a way that will enable us to provide appropriate conditions for sustainable development in Africa. In that way the peoples of Africa will be able to enjoy peace and make use of the economic opportunities available to them and which they richly deserve.

In his report in document A/52/871, the Secretary-General referred to the causes of conflict in Africa and indicated that the main causes of the problems — racial conflict, tribal struggles and political instability in some of its parts, and economic underdevelopment in many of its parts — are the result of actions by those who violated the territorial integrity of those African countries and divided their tribes by the borders which they demarcated. The history of Africa clearly shows that not a single African country demarcated its own borders with its neighbours. The colonial Powers did this. Thus they fragmented kingdoms, States and groups and unjustly and arbitrarily joined unrelated tribes. In that way, when nobody was watching, they sowed the seeds of what we now witness in the way of the social conflict, ethnic tensions and civil wars which face many of the countries of the continent.

As the African continent was afflicted by foreign forces that confiscated its lands and imposed ignorance on its people, it has fared no better economically than it has politically and socially. The colonial Powers plundered and drained the resources of Africa. That led to distortions caused by the colonialists in the African economy and structures that are difficult to replace. The patterns of exchange that prevailed during the colonial period — which are based on concentrating on the extraction of minerals and other primary materials and their export for fabrication outside Africa — have been difficult to replace. Furthermore, no significant investment took place during that period with regard to the infrastructure such as roads, railroads, ports and airports. The education and health-care sectors were also neglected.

Financial and trade agreements offered to Africa by many bilateral and multilateral institutions impose conditions that cannot lead to social peace, prosperity and development. They pave the way for unlimited foreign investment, the privatization of the public sector and the devaluation of currency.

Many African Governments were forced to sell their public economic sectors, including mines, not to private African sectors, but to foreign companies and monopolies which do not care about Africa's interest, but whose single purpose is to make huge profits and to satisfy their shareholders in economic centres in other countries. Is this not an injustice to Africa and to the sovereignty and dignity of its peoples? Those who want to help Africa should not impose conditions on it, but should help by supporting the potential of Africa in order to educate its children and enable it to exploit its resources. It is no longer acceptable that Africa should be a source of raw materials and a consumer market for manufactured goods.

Giving a new impetus for peace and sustainable development in Africa requires taking decisive and comprehensive actions in order to deal with the question of foreign debt afflicting the majority of African States. It also calls for a reconsideration of the unjust conditions imposed on African Governments for assistance by international and private financial institutions.

If we do not reach economic and trade cooperation agreements that give Africa fair prices for its commodities, if we do not give special support to these countries in order to deal with the impediments to their exports, and if we do not remove the African debt in which the competing forces have entangled Africa, African Governments will be unable to meet the basic needs of their people. They will also find themselves faced with continued upheavals threatening Africa's stability and conflicts endangering its security.

It is Africa's right to demand the cancellation of debts. The creditors should give serious consideration to this, if humanitarian, social and economic conditions truly cause them anxiety and if they would like to become genuine economic and commercial partners of Africa and not just neo-colonialists coming in another guise to plunder its resources. Any relationship, whether economic or commercial, if based on equality, will be really of tangible benefit. It is not fair to ask African countries to compete with those whose rise was due to Africa's bounty, and whose development was accomplished at its expense. It is unacceptable that Africa be left to flounder in its conflicts, poverty and underdevelopment while the international community stands by unperturbed, dropping to Africa the crumbs of lip service, offering no solution to a problem, no relief from hunger, no hope for salvation.

Africa has heard too many declarations and hollow promises. It is necessary to find a serious solution for the many problems besetting many African countries, to undertake serious action in order to provide better education for its children and to attain better health, social and economic standards for the other population sectors in Africa.

Africa knows very well that the responsibility for its growth and its progress lies primarily with its own sons. However, there is an external element that has greatly contributed to the situation. Colonialism in Africa which lasted for many years is responsible for the backwardness in the continent. It is for the States which have colonized the African peoples and exploited their resources to apologize to these peoples for the indignities which they have inflicted upon them and to fully compensate them for the damage done to Africa.

Peace in Africa is an integral part of international peace and development. Without stability in Africa there will not be peace in the world. Without development in Africa there will not be prosperity in the world. The members of the international community, particularly developed States, have to contribute to African efforts in order to achieve world peace and full stability.

If developed countries really intend, and have the political will, to help Africa, they have to cooperate practically with the efforts of the continent in order to eliminate hunger, disease and backwardness. They have to refrain from any action that could hamper these efforts. Repressive economic measures have been imposed by some countries on a number of States in Africa, including my own, on which unilateral American sanctions have been imposed for an entire decade. These sanctions are represented by the freezing of Libyan assets in United States banks, depriving Libya of important technology needed for its civil projects. In addition, the United States has enacted a law that extends extraterritorially beyond American jurisdiction in order to punish companies and individuals of other nationalities.

In spite of these economic measures imposed on my country, it has participated unilaterally and through bilateral initiatives and multilateral initiatives in the efforts to achieve peace in our continent and to bolster stability in Africa. My country, despite the suffering of its people for more than six years due to sanctions which the Security Council was forced to unjustly impose on it, has been generous in providing the necessary resources for the continent and their investment in a better manner. The joint banks and companies which we established in cooperation with our African brothers, whether in transport, fishing, mining or agriculture, are examples which do need elaboration and are facts which can stand by themselves with no need of proof.

In his report the Secretary-General refers to the causes of conflict in Africa. The support of regional subregional initiatives in Africa is necessary in order to deal with all its problems. My country welcomes the Secretary-General's remarks, as this is considered a natural matter which comes within the framework of the United Nations Charter. Under the Charter, a special role has been given to regional organizations to achieve the purposes of the Charter regarding the maintenance of international peace and security and the promotion of economic and social development.

We look forward to the United Nations encouraging the initiatives of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to solve and contain the conflicts in Africa, especially its capacity in the area of conflict resolution, the activation of its mechanism to prevent, contain and settle those conflicts and the consolidation of efforts to foster multilateral cooperation and economic integration among African States. We hope that the international community as a whole will take the necessary measures to guarantee the effective implementation of the activities of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, especially in the elimination of tariff barriers facing African exports, improvement of the infrastructures relating to economic and social development, the development of human resources and reinforcing the role of women in the development process. In addition, priority should be given to the least developed African countries, landlocked countries and countries that suffer from drought and desertification.

The Security Council has devoted two meetings in the last two years to African problems. At its meeting last year, it contributed to solving these problems. At the Council's meeting of last year, my country stated that consideration of African problems should not be restricted to a particular body, especially with regard to issues of international peace and security. It stated that this should be done at the highest level of the United Nations. We therefore welcome, once again, the decision to hold this discussion here, where we hope that it will be repeated on the basis of the principle that we have always confirmed, namely, that we have to activate the role of the General Assembly in order for it to carry out its function in accordance with the Charter. This includes handling international peace and security issues and the promotion of sustainable development. We are happy that this discussion is taking place now.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.